

# SMALL FARM *digest*

VOLUME 4, NO. 1 – FALL 2000

## Managing Farm Stress During Crisis Times

**W**e are one of thousands of family farmers across the nation who have chosen an agricultural way of life and done everything right, yet are facing a huge financial and emotional dilemma," says New York farmer Chalene Fleming.

"Our every financial resource has been tapped, cash flow is poor, and my husband and I are screaming at each other our frustrations and anxieties, while venting our concerns about the present and future."

"Farmers must rise to nature's daily challenges, taking in stride floods, fires, droughts, and climactic changes, demands of juggling family and farm, market shifts, and the pressures of large, corporate suppliers who can produce it 'faster and cheaper.' It's a daily struggle to try to stay on the cutting edge of what is new, has changed, and is coming.

"We are resourceful people who are proud of what we do, but we're asking these days, 'Where do we go from here?', 'Who can help us?', and 'How do we survive in the interim?'"

The current farm crisis has made farming a hard, stressful business in every state. Yet farmers continue to work hard while knowing they can do little against the financial pressures caused by outside forces. Many are delaying purchases, leaving bills unpaid, and even losing their farms through no fault of their own.

**Stress defined.** Stress is physical or emotional tension. It's a reaction to situations or circumstances that seem unfamiliar, threatening, or harmful.

Major life events or many small daily hassles can trigger stress. Everyone responds differently to it. A moderate amount of stress can prompt needed action. However, severe or prolonged



*After dairy farmers Sarah Jane and Paul Vitale (left and center), Auburn, NY, lost their barn to a fire in 1998, they turned to Russell Hodnett (right), a financial consultant with Cornell University's NY FarmNet Outreach Program, for advice on rebuilding. The Vitales decided on a new labor-efficient flat barn parlor design after Hodnett worked up their financial picture and a cash flow plan.—PHOTO BY DONALD R. HODNETT.*

stressful events can lead to physical or mental health problems, substance abuse, and interpersonal strain.

**Farm stress.** Farm family stress is unique because it is due, in large part, to forces no one has control over - like weather or shifting markets. Yet farmers and ranchers tend to blame themselves when their crops fail or their livestock is wiped out. Stress also makes farmers more accident-prone.

When things go well, a farmer feels that he or she has been successful. When things go wrong, the loss can feel like a family death.

Farmers and ranchers tend not to complain about bad things that happen to them. They believe in being strong, independent, stoic, and moral - and in handling problems themselves.

Within farm culture, there is reluctance to air problems outside the family or to seek professional help for mental health problems. While farm families can often bounce back from most stresses, extraordinary situations may require outside help.

When migrant workers traveled last

year to harvest in states affected by citrus freeze or drought, they found no crop to harvest. There was no work, wages, or housing. Worker stress was high as they became stranded far from home, returning without pay. Workers may hesitate to travel again unless they know that work exists. If farmers lose this traditional labor force, it will strain the larger agricultural system.

**Recognizing stress.** People who work with farmers - such as extension specialists, farm advocates, pastors, family doctors, bankers, veterinarians, agribusiness people, and others - need to understand farmer stressors.

**According to extension researchers, the top 30 farmer-related stressors are:**

- Death of family member or farm worker
- Foreclosure notice
- Mounting bills, low cash flow, middleman profits
- Divorce or marital separation
- Major illness or accident, insufficient insurance
- Care of elder or other special-needs family member

- Holding down both off-farm job and on-farm responsibilities
- Bad weather or natural disaster
- Low commodity prices and shifts in world supply and demand
- Lower than expected crop yields or livestock production
- Closing or relocation of key rural businesses
- Day when nothing goes right - machinery breakdown, crop or animal disease outbreak
- Power shut-off or stray voltage problems
- Death of a valuable animal
- Uncertain commodity prices at time of selling farm-grown products
- High costs of land, machinery, fuel, essential farm services, and other inputs
- Long hours
- Insufficient help, especially at planting or harvesting time
- Changes in government laws and regulations resulting in farm-related expenses
- Rejection of farm loan or inaccessible loan programs
- Discrimination practiced by farm program officials
- Inability to afford needed new technology
- Heirs who don't want to run family farm business(es)
- Farm-related heat stress, chemical or dust toxicity, equipment noise, lifting and repetitive motion strain
- Depletion of retirement savings to sustain farm operation
- Nearing retirement age but can't afford to stop farming
- Housing development encroachment, complaints about farm odors
- Farm numbers dwindling in community, farm families feeling isolated
- Vandalism of property
- Outside population that doesn't understand farm culture

**Physical signs of stress overload.** Sustained stress, life crisis, exhaustion, and demoralization may cause physical symptoms like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts; headaches; sleep or

appetite problems; chronic fatigue; frequent sickness; poor concentration; heart disease; ulcers; cancer; gastrointestinal or bladder problems; immune system disorders; obesity; hair loss; muscle twitches; or backaches.

### **Behavioral signs of stress overload.**

Stress strains relationships. Stress symptoms include atypical, uncontrollable, and irrational behavior; irritability; violence or abuse toward family members or animals; loss of interest and withdrawal from family or community events; repeated irrational or normal activity at irrational rate. Also, passive aggressiveness; self-destructive behavior; talk of suicide; excessive drinking; being more emotional; difficulty concentrating and making decisions; accident proneness; and feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, or failure.

**Farmer Suicide.** "Farmer suicide is an international calamity, not just an individual problem," says Kentucky filmmaker Joe Terrance Gray in his compelling documentary, "Green Blood, Red Tears."

Gray investigated farmer suicide causes after his farmer nephew, James Gray Goodman, killed himself in 1995, stunning his family and community. "Farmer suicide spans mid-America and is often misreported as hunting, traffic, or stalled truck on railroad accidents," says Gray. "Farmers are far more likely than are other workers to commit suicide, especially in the Midwest. There is not enough talk about farmer suicide."

Gray's film aims to open up that dialogue.

American and European scientists offer convincing evidence of a link between organophosphate exposure among farmers and symptoms such as depression and suicidal thoughts.

Most physicians are not trained to identify toxic chemical exposure symptoms in patients. When traditional antidepressant medication is prescribed for depression among poisoned patients, suicidal thoughts may increase. Gray's nephew reported headaches, numb hands, troubled sleep, and depression after using chemicals in crop spraying.

Dr. Lorann Stallones, Professor,

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Department of Environmental Health, Colorado State University, has studied farmer suicide rates in Kentucky and Colorado.

"Gray's film introduces research never linked together before," she says. "When farmers experience depressive symptoms, it is critical that they tell their physicians the specific chemicals they use.

"Physicians working with farmers exposed to organophosphate chemicals should monitor these patients when they prescribe standard anti-depression medications," she adds.

"Immediate symptoms of acute poisoning can be detected, but it is difficult for many doctors to correlate symptoms with low-level, long-term exposure. Vague symptoms of chronic exposure are more likely to be recognized by occupational medicine physicians.

"Many farmers do not wear adequate protective clothing when working with pesticides and herbicides. We want to get the message out that they need protection."

Extension agents and state pesticide applicator training program coordinators teach safe pesticide application procedures.

Other organophosphate exposure symptoms include exhaustion, weakness, numbness, confusion, dizziness, blurred and dark vision, cold sweating, salivating, watery eyes, stuffy or runny nose, twitching eyelids and tongue, vomiting, cramp-like abdominal pain, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, and chest tightness.

**Disasters.** Disaster victims may express disbelief, anger, sadness, anxiety, and depression afterwards. Children need extra attention, love, support, and reassurance.

**Farm Deaths.** Farm deaths can happen suddenly and unexpectedly. Feelings of numbness, sadness, depression, anger, fear, emptiness, aching, hopelessness, and low energy are natural reactions.

A minister or grief counselor can help. A hug, knowing look, touch, praying together, or making a sacred memorial spot on the farm to honor the individual can mean a lot. Grief is a natural healing process that lessens over time.

### Some Signs a Farm Family Needs Support:

- Routine changes - social withdrawal
- Increase in illness or accidents
- Decline in personal, farm, home appearance
- Neglect or abuse of children or animals
- Dramatic change in children's behavior
- Substance abuse, spousal abuse, verbal and physical abuse

**Managing Stress.** Ways to manage stress need not be expensive:

- Acknowledge the reality of the situation.
- Understand what causes *you* stress.
- Focus energy on situations you can control.
- Set realistic goals for your farm operation.
- Have a yearly physical checkup.
- Take time for quiet moments and music.
- Take short work breaks.
- Practice breathing deeply and relaxing muscles.
- Exercise.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat nutritious food.
- Stay in close relationship with family and community.
- Create more relaxation time with significant others.
- Be kinder and gentler with words and actions to family.
- Find outlets for anxiety and frustration like prayer, social gatherings, sports, or hobbies.
- Use humor.
- See your minister, priest, rabbi, or other spiritual leader for counseling.

**Managing Risk.** Financial stress immobilizes people. A financial analysis of your operation by a farm business association or other expert can pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

Software programs designed specifically for agriculture, like FarmWin, jointly developed by Sunrise Software, farmers, and USDA's Agricultural Research Service, offer farmers a tool to maintain

### SELECT FARMER HELP LINES

- National Suicide Hopeline Network - 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). Connects to staff skilled in helping farmers and ranchers within network of 100 crisis centers.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)
- National Pesticide Telecommunication Network for Consumer and Medical Information on Pesticides - 1-800-858-7378
- Pesticide Accident Hotline (CHEMTREC) (help with spills and leaks) - 1-800-424-9300
- National Insure Kids Now Hotline for free or low-cost health coverage for children in working families - 1-877-KIDS-NOW
- Alabama - 1-800-642-7761
- Idaho - 1-877-862-5870
- Illinois - 1-800-851-4719 & 1-800-468-1834
- Indiana - 1-800-545-2296
- Iowa Concerns Hotline - 1-800-447-1985 (in-state); 515-965-9301 (out-of-state)
- Iowa Teen Hotline - 1-800-443-8336; TTY - 1-800-735-2942; Healthy Families - 1-800-369-2229
- Kansas - 1-800-321-3276; 785-532-6958 (in-state)
- Louisiana - 225-388-4141 (Gerald Giesler or Raye Neely)
- Minnesota Farm Advocate Program - 1-800-967-2474 (in-state); 651-296-1484 (out-of-state); Minnesota - Rural Crisis - 1-800-555-6566; 1-800-363-3659
- Missouri - 1-800-363-3659; 573-681-5549 (mediation); 573-449-1336 (Rural Crisis Center)
- Nebraska - 1-800-464-0258 (in-state); 402-864-5578 (out-of-state). Farm Mediation Service - 1-800-446-4071
- New Hampshire - 603-271-3551 (mediation)
- New Jersey - 732-932-9171, ext. 253 (Robin Brumfield)
- New York - 1-800-547-3276
- North Dakota - 1-800-472-2911; 1-800-642-4752 (in-state); 701-328-4769 (out-of-state)
- Oklahoma - 1-800-248-5465 (mediation)
- Pennsylvania - 1-800-851-4719
- South Dakota - 1-800-691-4336; 1-800-228-5254 (in-state); 605-773-5436 (out-of-state)
- Tennessee - 1-800-345-0561
- West Virginia - 1-800-851-4719
- Wisconsin - 1-800-942-2474
- Wyoming - 307-766-5133 (Alan Schroeder)

their own accurate farm records.

Farms vary in their ability to weather shocks, as operations vary widely with enterprise mix, financial situations, and business and household characteristics. Managing risk involves combining farm activities to maximize return at a manageable level of risk.

A risk management strategy might include enterprise diversification, vertical integration, production contracts, crop yield and crop revenue insurance, or off-

farm jobs.

Fiscal skills are critical. Successful farmers may not produce more than neighbors but manage resources well and make money on cost efficiencies. They carefully watch inputs and family costs, purchasing a new part or equipment only when absolutely necessary.

Survival may not be possible in severely stressed farm businesses. Financial advisors can help farmers determine if the farm business can survive with oper-

ating changes and restructured assets or debts, whether cash flow is sufficient for the long term, or if resources warrant expansion.

### **Helping a Farmer Friend in Crisis.**

People in crisis need someone to really listen so that they can tell what is happening and affirm the difficulty of the situation.

Be available, give full attention, make eye contact, and focus on what a person is saying with their face, eyes, voice, body,

## **INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND APPROACHES**

- Concerned about America's high divorce rate effects on families, extension specialists are developing programs that promote strong couples. Research indicates that strong couple relationships help people survive tough times and that deep spiritual beliefs make a positive difference in people's lives.
- Qualities that mark strong families are remarkably similar across cultures - commitment, positive communication, spiritual well-being, appreciation and affection, spending quality time together, and viewing crises as challenges to grow stronger together.
- Churches are equipping local pastors to serve farm families in stress and disaster situations. Pastor Stan Waldon, Methodist Church Farm Crisis Chairman, meets monthly in Brownsville, TN, with agricultural agents, ministers, and farmers to stay briefed on how agricultural change affects local farm families and outreach needed. Ministers are meeting farmers on their own turf to build trust.
- Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin are developing customized and creative prevention and crisis intervention services for farmers through the "Sowing the Seeds of Hope: Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Farm Fam-

ilies" Program. Funded by a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant, primary and mental health providers, statewide organizations, academic institutions, farm-based organizations, social service agencies, and faith organizations are collaborating. (For more information, contact Tammy Quall, Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, phone 608-277-7464.)

- Partners for Farm Health and Safety at University of Minnesota Extension Service teamed up with professional actors in the "Farm Alarm: Coping With Stress" workshop, which dramatizes farm stress and teaches stress management. The workshop involves audience discussion about the impact of stress on health, safety, relationships, and quality of life. To arrange a performance, phone 612-624-7444, email: fs@gaia.bae.umn.edu, or see website at [www.bae.umn.edu/~fs/farmalarm](http://www.bae.umn.edu/~fs/farmalarm). Order brochure at \$60 per copy, payable to University of Minnesota, by contacting Farm Safety & Health Program, University of Minnesota, 1390 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108-6005.
- Farm Women Network, a non-profit group formed by three Minnesota farm women, addresses farm women's life challenges. Forums help farm women build unity despite

differences in farm size, ages, working on or off farm, commodity type, political party, farm organization affiliation, or environmental opinions. A newsletter celebrates farm women's strengths. A video and discussion packet called "Healing Stories" offers training. For more information, call Dorothy Rosemeier at the University of Minnesota at 320-589-1711.

- Farmer support groups are gaining acceptance. Forming within churches, during farm couple retreats, and at other settings, such small groups offer fellowship, support, and encouragement.
- As part of "Sowing the Seeds of Hope," Extension 4-H Youth Specialist Trisha Day used the American Indian Talking Circle with eight farm teenagers in a workshop during the 2000 State 4-H Youth Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Participants were asked to hold a stone representing Mother Earth and were told that no one need fear speaking from the heart while holding Mother Earth's hand. For the first time, these teenagers shared their side of experiencing the Farm Crisis with other farm youth and considered ways to handle stress and help other teens discuss farm crisis issues. For more information, contact Day (email: [patricia.day@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:patricia.day@ces.uwex.edu)).

words, and feelings, more than their story. Give them ample time to talk.

Don't protect people in crisis from reality. People need to learn the truth. Give accurate information, even if it is negative.

It makes sense to most people to focus their energy on predictable life factors. Help farmers identify their major stressors and develop a plan to minimize effects. Ask them to specify symptoms. Brainstorm about solutions. Watch and listen for potential suicide behaviors like giving away cherished possessions or voicing suicidal thoughts.

Familiarize yourself with community mental health resources to offer options. Urge professional help if needed. Offer to contact the professional and accompany the person to an appointment. Follow up to show you really care.

## ***A Model Mental Health Crisis Outreach Program for Farmers***

Because he grew up on a farm, Roger W. Hannan knows the fierce pride and independent nature of farmers that make them resist seeking and accepting help from traditional office and fee-based mental health services.

While directing a community mental health center during the 1980's Farm Crisis, Hannan saw that the traditional mental health delivery system was not reaching farmers. Program providers did not understand the unique characteristics and special needs of rural families facing serious crises.

Programs did not take farm culture into account. He envisioned a mental health service outreach program that used culturally sensitive workers with farm backgrounds to do outreach.

In 1985, Hannan founded the non-profit Farm Resource Center to take mental health delivery back to a community setting. Extension agents, rural ministers, farm lenders, and community mental health and Farm Bureau professionals pro-

### **SELECT WEBSITE RESOURCES**

**[www.rma.usda.gov/news/archive.html](http://www.rma.usda.gov/news/archive.html)**  
Risk management information and farmer success stories from USDA's Risk Management Agency.

**[www.colostate.edu/depts](http://www.colostate.edu/depts)**  
Farming as a stressful occupation and family relationship fact sheets available from Colorado State University (click on "CoopExt" and then "Consumer" and "Family-Relationship").

**[fyd.clemson.edu/famlife.htm](http://fyd.clemson.edu/famlife.htm)**  
"The Taking Charge in Challenging Times" program and publication from Clemson University.

**[www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster)**  
Stress and disaster management links from North Carolina State University.

**[www.extension.umn.edu/ruralresponse](http://www.extension.umn.edu/ruralresponse)**  
Families and youth, farm management and farm financial planning, and stress and change management information from the University of Minnesota.

**[www.ces.purdue.edu/agtransition/family.html](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/agtransition/family.html)**  
See managing stress series called "Charting a Course for the Family Farm" from Purdue University.

**Community Resources.** Community mental health, medical, churches and archdiocesan centers; county extension, rural health, Salvation Army, and depart-

ment of health and human services field offices; and community food banks are sources of counseling help. ■

vided ideas.

Paid outreach workers with farm backgrounds, warmth with people, and crisis and suicide intervention training go to farmers' homes, devoting 3 hours for counseling. The kitchen table - a safe, familiar place for difficult discussions among farm families - is often the meeting spot.

Coming into the home setting, workers can observe the family and assess what help is needed. The whole family participates with the outreach worker to develop a 10-week action plan with goals, objectives, and timeframes. The family-focused program treats all family members, not just the one experiencing a problem.

Workers do not compete with community mental health centers and service provider agencies but instead work in partnership, making treatment referrals as situations warrant. They come supplied with county resource manuals and connect clients with help if they are too distressed to make contacts themselves.

"Entire rural communities in America are being phased out as America's agriculture structure changes. Many rural farm families feel nobody is noticing," says Hannan. "Factory farms with corporate land holdings are capturing the business of

producing food and fiber for American and overseas customers."

Workers are sensitive to the frustrations and feelings of hopelessness that at-risk farm families display.

"Personal, emotional, and stress issues are becoming more intense and widespread as farm families suffer family life disruption, community and sometimes farm displacement, and loss of their occupation and way of life. Families forced to leave the farm may still suffer depression 10 years later, even if doing better financially," says Hannan.

"Those who work with farm families must understand that farm culture creates in individuals responses to situations that may differ vastly from the non-farm community."

This model program began in Illinois and has spread to West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The Center offers clients confidentiality, a hot line, and a database to analyze their needs. Other states have inquired about setting up similar programs. For information, contact Roger Hannan, Executive Director, Farm Resource Center, 226 Main Street, PO Box 87, Mound City, IL 62963 (phone 618-718-9623; crisis hot line: 800-851-4719; website: <http://www.frci.org>). ■

## **Marilyn Easter and Cheryl Ettinger** **Laurens County, South Carolina**

Marilyn Easter and Cheryl Ettinger fully partner in dairying with their husbands in South Carolina's upstate area. Milk prices are the same as they were 20 years ago, hitting the industry hard.

Because many farm women do the farm record keeping, they are often the first to notice if the family farm is in trouble. Bad prices for milk add to the stress.

But these women have a secret stress buster - a dairy women's support group called Upstate Dairy Farm Women that has been meeting for 5 years.

Janis Hunter, a county extension agent from Clemson University, organized and led the first luncheon meeting of 12 women dairy farmers after they expressed a need for regular gatherings.

As they introduced themselves, each one's story got more emotional as feelings and tears held in for a long time were released. They were dealing with the precarious financial situation in dairying today, car accident recovery, divorce, and a life-threatening illness.

"The one who had the most reason to be totally depressed because of illness," recalls Easter, "was the most inspirational.

I could see myself through the younger ladies because I had been through their segment of life and realized the obstacles I have overcome and wisdom learned.

"I knew I could help the younger women with coping skills and inspire them because I have been there, done that, and survived. I realized that I had much to share with these women, who live dairy farming every day of their lives."

"I use the women's group as a chance to revitalize from the isolation of being a full-time dairy wife and mom," says Ettinger. "With these women you can say what is on your mind and they don't judge you or take offense. If you want to vent, they let you."

The second meeting started out emotionally, then the entire tone changed and there was lots of laughter. Monthly meetings include inspirational readings, food, fun times like theater outings, and tips on topics like family communication. The demands of farming do not easily allow special times for couples, so the women share secrets about keeping



*Marilyn Easter (right) with members of the Upstate Dairy Farm Women.—  
PHOTO BY DES KELLER, PROGRESSIVE FARMER MAGAZINE.*

marriages strong.

"My husband told me when we walked down the aisle," chuckles Easter, "I hope you realize you will be second to the cows. I laughed, but after 35 years of marriage I appreciate his honesty."

"I have more energy to pour into the farm after spending quality time with my women's group," says Easter. "We communicate in between meetings for a lift after especially hard days. And our husbands are very supportive of our group because they see the benefits - we are nicer to live with!" ■

**NEXT ISSUE ALERT:**  
**We will ask for your feedback  
on Small Farm Digest.**

## **Charles Strickland** **Clinton, North Carolina**

Small farmers in Sampson County, NC, work closely with their county extension service and North Carolina A&T University's Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program, which provides help in marketing and risk management.

Mary Mafuyai-Ekanem, Small Farms Management Specialist at North Carolina A&T, calls risk management "learning approaches to handle the unexpected."

The unexpected was what farmer Charles Strickland dealt with in 1999 when he lost his spring vegetable crops to drought and his fall crop to 5 feet of floodwaters from Hurricane Floyd.

"I never thought it could rain so much in a few hours!" says local extension agent James Hartsfield.

It rained all night. The next morning farms were under water. Strickland's family, like others, sought refuge in the local high school set up as a disaster shelter.

"All the ponds, creeks, rivers, and irrigation holes overflowed with water," says Strickland. "The ground was so saturated that the flood waters just sat there for days. All we had was water, water, water! It was too late to plant again so I had to wait until the next planting season.

"You just have to keep the faith and keep on pushing. That's what life is all about," says Strickland. "Farming is a hard way of life, but it also has great



*Mary Mafuyai-Ekanem (left) and James Hartsfield (center), North Carolina A&T, with Charles Strickland (right).—PHOTO BY ROSE STRICKLAND.*

rewards. My sons follow our family's farming tradition and my summer crops look good!" ■

A wide range of resources is available to assist small farmers and ranchers and their communities. Readers wishing further information about the resources listed below are asked to contact the individuals or offices listed for each item.



## PRINT MEDIA

**"Responding to Farm Stress."** Video teaches family members and people working with farmers how to respond to farmer stress. Cost: \$15. To order, contact Mercy Medical Center, 250 Mercy Drive, Dubuque, IA 52001 (phone 319-589-8035).

**Farm Crisis and Mental Health.** Special issue publication for mental health professionals who work with the farming community. Cost: \$2. To order, contact The National Association for Rural Mental Health, 3700 West Division St., Suite 105, St. Cloud, MN 56301 (phone 320-202-1820; website [www.narmh.org](http://www.narmh.org)).

**Out of the Blue: Understanding and Responding to Depression.** Depression resource. Free. Leader's guide also available. To order, contact Family & Consumer Sciences Extension, Family Studies Dept., 304



Funkhouser Bldg., University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0054 (phone 859-257-7753).

**Farm Support Group Manual.** How to start a farmer support group. Cost: \$8. Contact: NY FarmNet, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 415 Warren Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801 (phone 607-255-1603; website [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org)).

**"Healing Stories."** Video on self-worth, overload, and dealing with changes in agriculture using the arts. Discussion guide included. Cost: \$35, payable to Farm Women Network. To order, contact Dorothy Rosemeier, West Central Research and Outreach Center, State Hwy. 329, Box 471, Morris, MN 56267 (phone 320-589-1711).

**"Green Blood, Red Tears"** by Joe Terrance Gray. A video examining the incidence of farmer suicide through the suicide death of filmmaker's farmer nephew. Documents, through U.S. and British research, the interactions between suicide risk and economic pressures; socio-religious beliefs; and possible

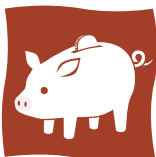
link of pesticides and prescription antidepressant medications. Cost: \$95 plus \$5 shipping. Make payable to Ag-Culture Media Project. To order, contact Colorado Injury Control Research Center, Colorado State University, Department of Environmental Health, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1676 (phone 970-491-0670).

**"An American Farm Tale."** USDA/EPA funded video on ways to avoid organophosphate insecticide poisoning. Cost: \$20 plus \$3 shipping. To order, contact Rutgers University, Pest Management Office, Blake Hall, 93 Lipman Dr., New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8524 (phone 732-932-9801).

**The Farmer's Guide to Disaster Assistance.** Comprehensive guide to disaster assistance programs for farmers. Cost: \$18 to farmers, ranchers, non-profit organizations; \$40 to others; includes shipping. To order, contact Farmer's Legal Action Group, Inc., 46 East 4th St., Suite 1301, St. Paul, MN 55101 (order by credit card by calling 651-223-5400; fax: 651-223-5335).

**It's All in the Farm Family.** Publication offering interactive farm family activities and communication tips. Cost: \$4 (in-state); \$8 (out-of-state). To order, contact University of Wisconsin Extension Publications, 45 N. Charter St., Madison, WI 53715 (phone 608-262-2063).

A number of grant, loan, and training programs are available to support small farmers and their communities. Examples of such programs are summarized below. Readers wishing additional information are asked to contact the individuals or offices listed for each item.



## GRANTS, LOANS, TRAINING

**Small Farmer Assistance Program.** This national program administered by 27 entities in 27 states assists small and limited-resource farmers in improving net farm income through better management and financial analysis. A farm management specialist conducts one-on-one training at farmers' homes



or farms. Group training is held in local communities. Outreach services include assisting farmers in identifying available USDA and extension programs, applying for USDA operating and/or farm ownership loans, providing financial assistance like record keeping or production assistance like recommending crop varieties. For information about the program administered in your state, contact USDA's Office of Outreach (phone 202-720-1636).

### Rural Health Outreach and Rural Health Network Development Grant Programs.

The Office of Rural Health Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides funds to support the direct delivery of outpatient health care and related services through the Outreach Grant Program. The Network Development Grant Program is designed for organizations wanting to establish integrated systems of health care in rural communities. Community mental health centers and other health providers are eligible. Outreach applications are due October 16, 2000. Network applications are due October 23, 2000. To receive an application, call 1-877-477-2123. (Refer to CFDA 93.912A for Outreach Grant Program; CFDA 93.912B for Network Development Program.) For more information, see website: [www.nal.usda.gov/orhp](http://www.nal.usda.gov/orhp).

# UPCOMING

# EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
Oct. 27	<i>2000 Landowner/Navigating Through Changes in Agriculture Workshop</i>	Kearney, NE	Sharon Story or Marge Reed 1-800-346-2650
Oct. 31- Nov. 2	<i>"Markets, Tools, and Opportunities for Limited-Resource Farmers" Conference</i>	Modesto, CA	Karen Jameson - 202-720-5731 or marketingoutreach.usda.gov/info/index.htm
Nov. 7-10	<i>National AgrAbility Training Workshop</i>	San Antonio, TX	1-800-914-4424 or 202-347-3066
Nov. 17-19	<i>16th Annual California Farm Conference, "Healthy Farms - Healthy Communities: Ingredients for Success"</i>	Santa Rosa, CA	Marci Rosenzweig - 530-888-9206 or www.californiafarmconference.com
Dec. 7-9	<i>Acres U.S.A. Conference</i>	Minneapolis, MN	1-800-355-5313 or www.acresusa.com
Jan. 12-14	<i>Farm Couples Retreat</i>	Fond du Lac, WI	Kathy Schmitt - 1-800-942-2474
Jan. 15-21	<i>"Diversity in the Desert" - North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Assn. Annual Conference</i>	Mesa, AZ	1-888-884-9270
Feb. 25-28	<i>"Strengthening Families and Youth: Strategies for Success" Workshop</i>	Myrtle Beach, SC	864-656-5721 or fyd.clemson.edu/SFY.htm

See Small Farm website ([www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm](http://www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm)) for the most up-to-date listing of events. We welcome submissions of events from our subscribers that would be of interest to the small farm community so that our Upcoming Events listing reflects a diversity of events from all regions of the country. Please send

submissions to Stephanie Olson, Editor, *Small Farm Digest*, CSREES, USDA, Mail Stop 2220, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-2220 (phone: 202/401-6544; fax: 202/401-5179; e-mail: [solson@reeusda.gov](mailto:solson@reeusda.gov)).

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**1400 Independence Ave, SW**  
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## *Your Small Farm Neighbors*

### **Paul and Sarah Jane Vitale Auburn, New York**

Paul and Sarah Jane Vitale, who operate a 300-acre dairy farm in central New York, lost their dairy barn in just an hour to an electrical fire in 1998. Luckily, most cows had been let out of the barn just before the fire.

"This fire hit us particularly hard because our barn also burned down in 1971. While we could have lost our entire

herd, we still felt a great sense of loss," says Sarah Jane. "We wondered if we should just get out of farming - because we have had some really hard times - or rebuild and continue."

"The neighbors were awesome," says Paul. "My farmer neighbor took half my herd and my brother-in-law the other half until our new barn was built."

For advice the Vitales turned to long-time friend Russell Hodnett, an experienced financial consultant, who works for Cornell University's NY FarmNet Outreach Program. It offers a wide range of services through field staff to help farmers solve problems.

"Russell showed us a new flat barn parlor design, went over our financial picture, and worked up what would make our cash flow work," says Paul. "We decided to rebuild."

Today, the Vitales' herd has increased to 135, and their new barn is almost fire-proof, very modern, labor efficient, and cost effective.

"We will never forget the help we received from family, church, neighbors, and NY FarmNet," says Sarah Jane. "We could not easily have come through this alone."

"And our new barn set-up is working efficiently, just like Russell said it would," adds Paul. ■

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### **Sybil Bullard Red Springs, North Carolina**

She grew up in the close-knit Lumbee Indian community of Pembroke, NC, where neighbors value hard work, family commitment, and a love of the land.



*Sybil Bullard.*—**PHOTO BY  
MORRELL PRIDGEN.**

Farmer neighbors told Bullard there was a need for her

family's business in the community.

"They assured me they were not going to take their business elsewhere just because my father died," says Bullard. "I assured them that I was going to continue to run a dependable business for them."

Family and neighbors gave strong moral support.

"I was also sustained by my strong religious upbringing, which taught me that a Greater Spirit is looking out for everyone."

Bullard gave up her career aspirations in international banking to learn the family business. She turned to brokers and other grain industry professionals for business knowledge.

"When farmers bring you their grain, you are dealing with their livelihood. They trust you to be fair and honest and to pay them."

Bullard has always treated her customers with honesty and respect. Today her business thrives. She is married to a full-time farmer and is a busy mother of two.

"We help each other in good times and bad in this community," she says. "Community is an extension of the family. And it takes a whole community to raise a family these days." ■